KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MARKETING

TOPIC:

EXPLORING THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING ON SALES PROMOTION AMONG SMES IN GREATER ACCRA

BY

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THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND CORPORATE STRATEGY, KWAME NKRUMAH UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, KUMASI IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE IN MARKETING

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work toward the MSc and that to the best of my knowledge no part of it has been presented for another degree in this University or elsewhere except for the references to other people's work which have been duly acknowledged.

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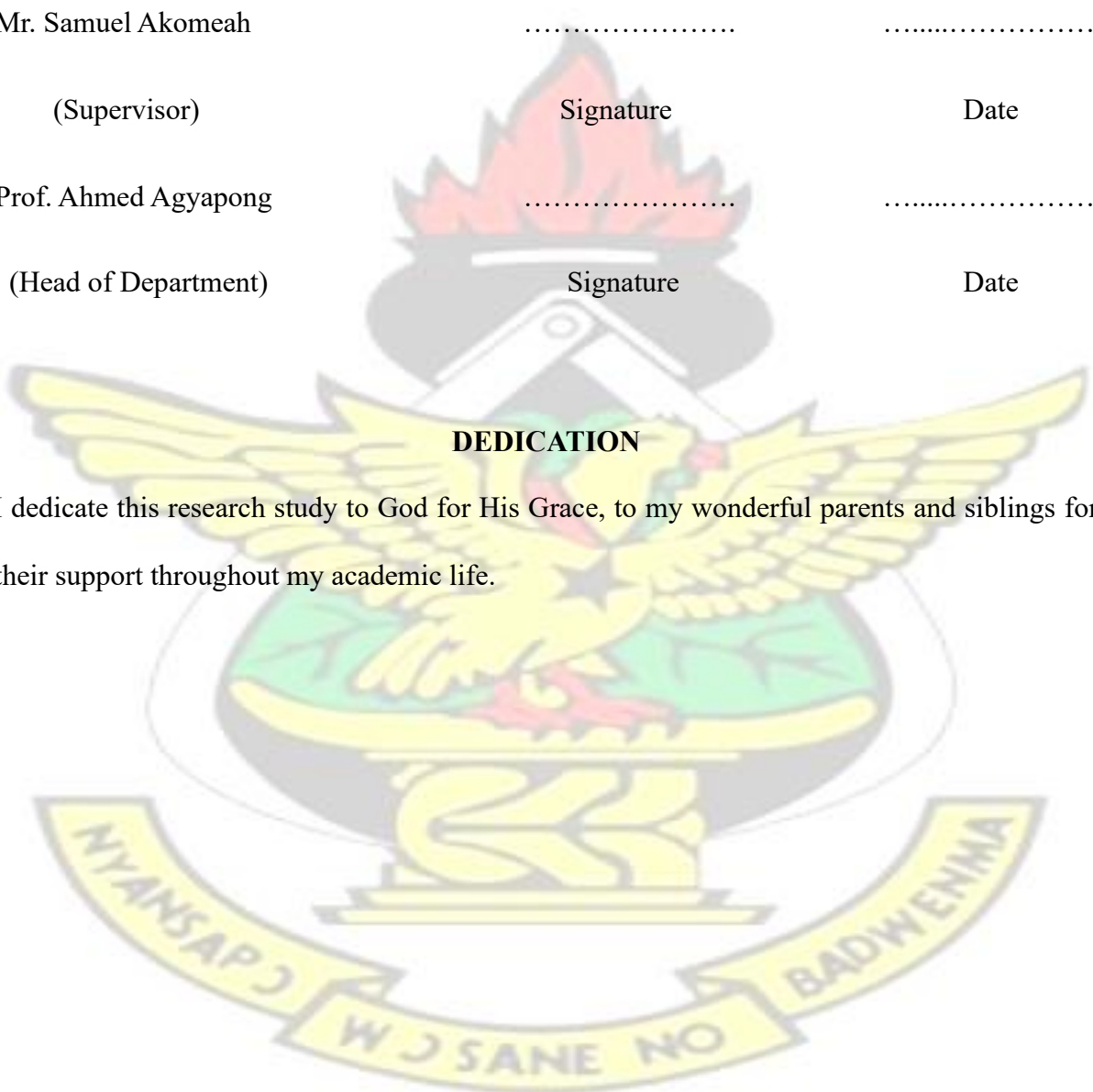Prof. Ahmed Agyapong   …………………   …....……………

   (Head of Department)   Signature   Date

DEDICATION

I dedicate this research study to God for His Grace, to my wonderful parents and siblings for their support throughout my academic life.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to explore the influence of social media on sales promotion in SMEs. The objectives set aimed to pinpoint the primary social media marketing tactics employed by Ghana's retail industry to boost SME products. Additionally, we evaluated how these marketing

methods impacted SME sales promotions within Ghana's retail sector. Utilizing a qualitative research method, data was gathered from ten businesses in Accra, represented by their respective CEOs, Co-founders, MDs, and the like, via comprehensive interviews. Key among the findings is that all businesses use social media. In terms of how they employ them in their daily activities actually depended on the scope of the organizational objectives and industry as well. In relation to the influence of social media on sales, it was found that the study affirms the established understanding of the crucial role social media plays in modern business strategies. It is therefore clear that in the evolving digital landscape, businesses, big or small, stand to gain immensely from an astute and responsive social media strategy.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

More businesses are using social networks to promote sales of goods and services, gain awareness and exposure, and communicate with potential customers in real time online as a result of technological advancements and an increase in internet users (Štreimikienė et al., 2021). Due to its ability to unify the largest number of users and carry out a variety of business objectives, internet marketing is currently regarded as one of the most effective marketing strategies (Stoian et al., 2018). The rapid rise in popularity of social networks and social commerce is regarded as the third revolution in communication, giving businesses the ability to engage with their target audience wherever they are and whenever they choose (Pavlovaite & Gresiene, 2019; Zhang et al., 2020). As a result, the impact of the internet and marketing tools in general is a phenomenon that is highly significant in the corporate world and is rapidly evolving.

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are crucial to Ghana's economic development, just like they are in the majority of developing nations. Small and medium-sized businesses are now the foundation of Ghana's private economy, according to studies. According to Deku et al. (2022), majority of businesses in the commercial landscape in Ghana are SMEs. Their activities range from acting as a major supplier of goods and services to people and large corporations, providing employment for roughly 85% of the manufacturing workforce (Siebu, 2019). The African Development Bank (2023) also emphasize that that in Ghana, more than 85% of enterprises are SMEs and these SMEs contribute towards 70% of the country's gross domestic product. Further, Siebu (2019) reports that 75% of all companies registered in Ghana are SMEs, and around 92% of those enterprises make up the country's total number of companies. This

demonstrates unequivocally how important SMEs are to Ghana's and Africa's overall economic development.

Due to financial and management difficulties, SMEs are viewed as poor economic contributors in Ghana despite the considerable role they play in the country (Kissi et al., 2022). Particularly in developing countries like Ghana, these limitations restrict the sustainability, profitability, and expansion attempts of SMEs. However, the introduction of social media seems to present SMEs with a chance to compete both locally and globally (Siebu, 2019). This is because, according to a reportage by Datareportal (2022), there are more than 4.9 billion internet users worldwide, making up around 62.5% of the entire population, an increase since the previous year. As shown by estimates from 2022, Facebook, the most popular social media platform, has 3 billion monthly active users (Adobe, 2022), a trend which indicates that 1-2 out of every
3 people identified online use Facebook, with mobile access being the most likely method. Considering all the different social media platforms, approximately 4.70 billion individuals worldwide engage with social media (Backlinko, 2022).

The data that is available also demonstrates that Ghana currently has a significant social media presence and that the tendency is the same there. Nearly every mobile internet user in Ghana either has a social media profile or uses messaging services like WhatsApp. Data shows that there are over 16 million users, underscoring the growing trend of social media usage in the country (Statista, 2022). This underscores the extensive reach of social media within Ghana.

There is evidence to suggest that ICT-based platforms are gradually changing how SMEs operate (Coffie et al., 2022). Researchers believe that greater use of social media platforms is assisting SMEs in developing strategies to lower operating costs, lower product/service pricing, and raise public support, among other things (Issau et al., 2021). The prevalent use and inherent benefits of social media suggest a significant opportunity for SMEs in Ghana to expand their

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businesses and enhance sales. However, the question remains: How fully have SMEs adopted this technology, and specifically, how has social media influenced the sales promotions of these SMEs? In order to understand the impact social media is having on SMEs in Ghana, this study aims to address these questions.

1.2 Problem Statement

Social media's transformative influence on business is undisputed, particularly for SMEs (Amoah, 2020; Amoah & Jibril, 2021). Yet, a notable research gap exists in its specific impact on sales promotions within Ghanaian SMEs—a sector that plays a significant role in the national economy, accounting for over 70% of the Gross Domestic Product (Adjab & Osei, 2022). While a wealth of literature exists on the role of social media in brand awareness (Amoah & Jibril, 2020; Bruce et al., 2022; Nwali & Ntegeeh, 2022) and consumer engagement (Baako, 2023; Cheng & Shiu, 2019; Dankwa, 2021), these studies often overlook the area of sales promotions.

Furthermore, studies (Jones et al., 2015; Štreimikienė et al., 2021; Wardati & Mahendrawathi, 2019) that does investigate the utilization of social media for sales promotions by SMEs is predominantly conducted in Western or developed-world contexts. This leaves a dearth of knowledge applicable to developing economies. In essence, this development poses a problem for direct application of these findings to the Ghanaian market, as Banks and Banks (2019) contextual differences may render such findings both inappropriate and misleading. This study intends to address this significant gap by focusing on the unique attributes of the Ghanaian context.

Besides, the need for targeted research is amplified by the evolving landscape of consumer behavior in the digital age (Martiskova & Svec, 2020; Saura et al., 2020), coupled with rising digital literacy rates in Ghana (Bokpin & Akakpo, 2023). These factors indicate that Ghanaian

SMEs might be forgoing important opportunities for growth by not optimizing social media in their sales promotion strategies. In essence, the absence of focused research leaves SMEs in Ghana without actionable intelligence for effective resource allocation and strategic planning. Therefore, addressing this gap is not just an academic necessity; it is an economic imperative that has direct ramifications for resource allocation, strategic planning, and market competitiveness for SMEs in a developing economy.

1.3 Research Objectives

1. Determine the primary social media marketing tactics employed by the retail sector in Ghana to boost SME products.

2. Appraise the impact of social media marketing on the promotional sales of SMEs within Ghana's retail sector.

1.4 Research Questions

1. Which primary social media marketing methods do SMEs in Ghana's retail sector utilize to enhance sales?

2. In what ways does social media marketing affect the sales promotion of SMEs within the Ghanaian retail sector?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study has a big impact on practice, research, and policy. This study considerably advances the understanding of Ghanaian SME marketing and social media uptake and usage. This research adds to the niche domain of SME growth via social media marketing, building upon existing studies in the realm of SME development. This study as well provides information that managers of SMEs in Ghana's retail sector may use to build and expand their businesses through the effective use of social media. Social media seems to be seen right now in terms of its advantages for communication and enjoyment.

It seems, nevertheless, that Ghanaian business owners have not looked into social media's advantages for growth enough which is why the results of this study thus boosts managers of SMEs' awareness of and knowledge of the effects of social media on business. In terms of policy implications, this research provides an opportunity for the government to intervene and support technological advancements for SMEs in Ghana. The nation's technological evolution is intrinsically tied to government initiatives. By promoting subsidies on mobile devices and ensuring that internet service providers offer cost-effective services to data users, this study can guide policymakers in implementing strategies that encourage technology adoption.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The study is introduced in Chapter 1. It includes the study's background, issue statement, aims, research questions, significance, scope, and constraints, as well as the way the study was organized. The study's literature review is included in Chapter 2. It includes a review of prior literature to locate data that allowed the study to be more narrowly focused. Thus, it reviewed the study's empirical literature and pertinent theories. The approach employed in the study to arrive at the conclusions is described in Chapter 3. The research design, sampling method, data processing procedure, and study limits are all covered in this chapter. Chapter 4 encompasses the discussion, analysis, and interpretation of empirical findings related to the primary variables of the study. The study is summarized in Chapter 5 of the thesis, which also includes conclusions and suggestions for future academic inquiry as well as policy judgments.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter delves into a comprehensive overview of previous studies pertinent to or associated with the subject at hand. In this part, scholarly works, books, and other pertinent materials were examined. By valuing the work of earlier researchers, the chapter helped to establish the study's theoretical framework. The methodological strategy the study plans to use for data collection is described in the following chapter.

2.2 Conceptual Framework

2.7 Conceptual Framework of the Study

2.2.1 Social Media

Social media is hard to define properly due to its ongoing evolution. There is no universally recognized definition of social media (Ortiz-Ospina & Rose, 2023) but over time, a wide range of academics have described it from different perspectives. For instance, Hinton and Hjorth (2019) defined social media as a collection of web-based programs that expand on the conceptual and practical pillars of Web 2.0 and enable the production and exchange of usergenerated content. According to Bernard and Dzandza (2018), social media also refers to websites and applications used for social networking. Another way to characterize social media is as a very well-liked, speedy, and broad communication channel that has won the confidence of billions of users while also demonstrating its superior ability to share and discover content about individuals, brands, information, entertainment, and knowledge (Kaplan & Mazurek, 2018). The underlying theme throughout all of these definitions is that social media involves some form of online interpersonal communication.

"SixDegrees," the first well-known social media platform, made its debut in the late 1990s. This technology allowed users to create profiles and make acquaintances. Several community tools, such as Asian Avenue, BlackPlanet, and MiGente, began enabling various combinations of profile and publicly declared friends between 1997 and 2001 (Aichner et al., 2021). Since then, there have been significant developments, and there are now a profusion of social networking sites designed for local, specialized, or global use. Social networking sites (FB, 2go, BB chat), Virtual game Worlds (World of War Craft), Collaborative projects (Wikipedia), Blogs and microblogs (Twitter), Content communities (YouTube), Social networking sites (FB, 2go, BB chat), and Virtual second world as in a secondary life were the six (6) categories that Kaplan and Mazurek (2018) divided social media into.

Given the variety of social media platforms available today, it may be challenging to determine which class a newly developed social media type belongs to. The separation of social media into classes has made it easier for academics and individuals to identify and research a certain social media type. Technology improvements are facilitating social media's explosive expansion, which Heyam (2014) claims is the fastest-growing web application of the twentyfirst century. It has greatly benefited humanity and continues to do so. As a result, its significance for communication cannot be emphasized. As a result of the development of mobile phones that support social network applications, social media has changed and experienced an increase in involvement. Humphreys (2007) asserted that social network applications have been moved from computers to mobile phones, that network information and communication can be integrated into public spaces, and that these new services created for mobile phones allow users to establish, grow, and strengthen their social ties.

2.2.2 Sales Promotion

In contrast to brand acceptance, sales promotion offers increase brand awareness (Gillespie et al., 2022). This is particularly because consumers make decisions based on how useful each

product was to them. A consumer will buy a product if it is most useful to them. Sales promotions increase the usability of the product to entice customers to purchase it. Despite this, Bysella et al. (2018) contends that sales promotion has no impact on a consumer's brand loyalty; rather, it merely serves to temporarily draw customers to a product while maintaining their allegiance to it over the long run. For instance, Amankwah and Asare (2019) discovered that sales promotion has a favorable effect on brand loyalty in Ghana. The consumer's income has a significant role in influencing their decision to purchase promotional goods or services. Consumers switch from the brand they were previously using in order to take advantage of promotional offers and programs. Therefore, businesses that face intense competition adopt sales promotion strategies to get a competitive edge and draw in customers (Nashit Zafar et al., 2018).

Sales promotion is typically used to hasten the purchase process and is intended to encourage customers to buy the promoted goods (Widjaja, 2022). However, consumers choose goods and services that are advantageous to them financially and hedonically, even though manufacturers and service providers also stand to gain from the promotion of their goods and services. In the form of boosting sales to maximize profit (Fajriyah & Marsudi, 2021). As a result, it makes sense that Kisa et al. (2021) point out that sales promotions have a large beneficial impact on consumer purchasing behavior and that, similarly, culture can affect a consumer's decision to make a purchase in relation to a sales promotion. This is so that the effects of culture on customer behavior can be moderated by sales promotion, which can affect consumer behavior irrespective of culture. Consumers in various cultures depend their decisions on how well the commercials are perceived (Fanani & Indayani, 2022).

In addition, Ofosu-Boateng (2020) note that while sales promotion encourages customers to buy via a variety of marketing strategies, it also works to emotionally draw them to certain goods and services. Time limits, deadlines, happy hour, and similar strategies are employed to

emotionally seek customers (Santos, 2018). The company's sales are increased by sales promotion. Regardless matter whether it involves money or not, the goal of each sales promotion is to attract customers. The results of Rahman et al. (2021) might thus be used to support the claim that promotional sales do affect customer loyalty or behavior. As a result, the consumer believes that the sale-promoted goods come with financial or other incentives. Perrone (2021) emphasizes that businesses immediately benefit from sales promotion in order to achieve their desired sales or revenue. The company's sales are increased by sales promotion. Regardless matter whether it involves money or not, the goal of each sales promotion is to attract customers. The results of Rahman et al. (2021) might thus be used to support the claim that promotional sales do affect customer loyalty or behavior.

A legitimate technique to increase sales and establish a presence in the market was through the promotional activities. In addition to TV ads and other forms of advertising, sales promotions are one of the most effective ways to attract customers. Sales promotion efforts, the study discovered (Markwei et al., 2022), have a favorable impact on consumers' attention seeking and alter their purchasing habits. This is due to Amankwah and Asare's (2019) observation that sales promotion works well to persuade customers if businesses desire to have a consistent influence over them. The promos truly meet and satisfy the needs of the consumers. It is one way to contact customers and develop relationships in every industry to match the demands of consumers in the competition.

Table 1: Digital Sales Promotion Model
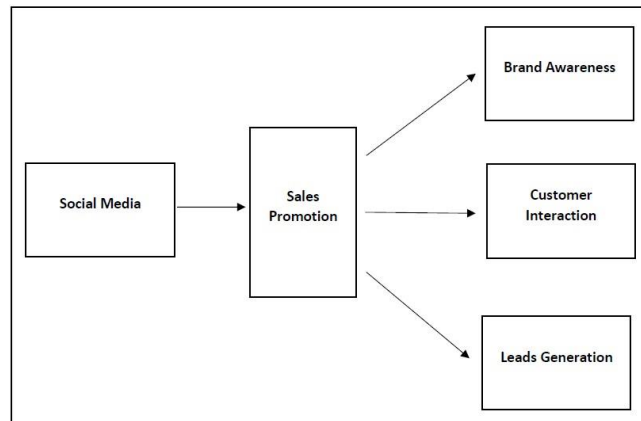
Source: Researcher's Construct, 2022

What this means is that organizations may employ social media for specific objectives. In this case, sales promotion is the critical aim of SMEs. This is because in the end, the purpose for its adoption would have been realized. The usage of social media as a means of sales promotion helps establish and increase brand awareness, generate leads as well as customer interaction. Nowadays, it has become very important and crucial to be closer to the customer at all times and this has become possible through social media. Given that a client, almost all of those who are online and use the internet, the moment they receive or use a product or service customers tell other users of the brand and this translates to referrals and more sales which engenders organizational growth.

2.2.3 Marketing Challenges in SMEs

Small businesses consistently grapple with a myriad of challenges. These arise mainly because the business owner is responsible for recruiting suitable staff, boosting sales, managing payroll, complying with tax regulations, and ensuring top-notch customer service. On top of these responsibilities, there's the imperative to market the business effectively to maintain or enhance visibility among the intended audience. For instance, Triton (2022) points out that 47% of small

business owners oversee their marketing endeavors personally, often leading to difficulties in tracking return on investment and gauging the efficacy of their marketing initiatives.

It is therefore not surprising that Belás et al. (2021) cites lack of marketing budget as a key challenge for SMEs. Reason being that managers in this area do not earmark funds budget strictly for marketing. Though marketing in the era of social media is often labeled as "free", the reality is that nothing is truly without cost, especially not marketing. Even if a business does not intend to allocate funds for advertising immediately, Iqbal et al. (2018) emphasize the adage that time equates to money, and marketing invariably consumes time. This implies that whether marketing tasks are handled internally or outsourced, time must be diverted from other business facets to accommodate marketing efforts. It is for this reason that Matt et al. (2020) insists that SMEs need to make sure to budget at least for the time spent doing this.

Also, because of the size of SMEs, in some instances, there are only small marketing teams put together to carry out marketing tasks. According to Bocconcelli et al. (2018), this approach can potentially undermine the very purpose of marketing. When marketing is relegated to a sideline activity, its effectiveness diminishes. Outsourcing specific tasks might be the crucial step to transition from mere brand awareness to tangible sales. Building on this perspective, Gualtieri et al. (2020) suggest that SMEs should leverage the expertise of independent contractors and freelancers until they are capable of hiring full-time. Such workers can be engaged on a temporary basis or per project, providing the flexibility and expertise needed to drive progress.

Having a dedicated and well-resourced team is crucial because in the absence of that, it can lead to inconsistent marketing. Consistency is fundamental in cultivating trust with customers for a brand. If potential clients receive sporadic emails, notice stagnant activity on social media after following, or don't encounter the brand name frequently, their recall and trust in the business may wane. To mitigate this, Matt et al. (2020) recommends SMEs consider creating a

promotional calendar in advance or exploring the possibility of integrating marketing automation tools. These strategies can ensure continuous engagement even when direct attention to marketing is limited. Ultimately, while Eggers (2020) points out that most of these challenges are tactical, Ayoubi and Aljawarneh (2018) highlights that tactical challenges can most often be solved with a little planning and focus.

2.2.4 SMEs in the Retail Sector

More people are beginning to understand the significance of SMEs in economic development. According to Amoah and Amoah (2018), SMEs account for 60% of the employed workforce and 90% of all business units in Ghana. Saad et al. (2021) contend that a universal definition for SMEs is elusive, as it varies based on the entity defining it and the geographic context. For instance, a small business in Canada is one with fewer than 100 employees, but a SME is one with fewer than 500 (Korsakienė & Tvaronavičienė, 2012). SMEs, on the other hand, are organizations with less than 500 employees, according to the World Bank. Conversely, the World Bank defines SMEs as enterprises with fewer than 500 employees. Often hailed as dynamic job generators, SMEs are seen as the precursors to large-scale businesses and are considered vital catalysts for national economic growth.

Recent reports in Ghana have centered on the survival of SMEs and demand for new strategic directions if SMEs want to maintain their competitiveness and financial success in the future (Thompson Agyapong et al., 2018). According to Donkor et al. (2018), SMEs are essential to most economies, including Ghana's, because they generate a significant amount of employment and GDP. SMEs have been highlighted as the country's economic growth engine in Ghana in particular because of their significant contributions to job creation and poverty alleviation. As a result, the SME sector is sometimes seen as a valve for absorbing the abundance of young people without jobs in the Ghanaian economy (Amoah & Amoah, 2018).

According to Oduro (2020), SMEs in Ghana can be classified as either organized or disorganized. In contrast to organized ones, which have staff and a registered office and are often wholly owned by an individual, unorganized ones are typically made up of artisans who work in open spaces, temporary wooden buildings, or at home and employ little to no salaried personnel. Appiah et al. (2019) observed that in Ghana, a significant portion of SMEs are family-run, and there is often a blurred line between business and personal finances. In some cases, the accounts of the business owner or operator are indistinguishable from that of the business itself.

2.2.5 Sales Promotion Strategies in SMEs

Compared to traditional communication avenues, social media is perceived as more costeffective and convenient for both enterprises and consumers (Farhikhteh et al., 2020; Acheampong et al., 2018). It facilitates businesses in accessing their desired audience more promptly and efficiently, reshaping the way a company expands its clientele and market presence. This is particularly beneficial for SMEs, as they often grapple with challenges like limited funding and a shortage of skilled personnel (Odoom et al., 2017). According to scholars (such as López-López & Giusti, 2020; Crammond et al., 2018), social media has helped entrepreneurs allocate their market resources and has become a significant part of an organization's development through customer relationship management. Further, Crammond et al. (2018) points out that social media has been utilized to improve brand loyalty by increasing brand awareness, which has in turn boosted an organization's profitability and sales.

The enormous customer base and competitive benefits of social media have forced businesses to reconsider how social media functions and how to use it to reach their target customers and fulfill users' expectations (Ahmad et al., 2018). Additionally, data show that a business may utilize social media to improve profit and establish business worthiness because it is simple for businesses to use social media to reach their target clients whenever and wherever they are at

a minimal cost (Yan & Musika, 2018). Belás et al's (2021) suggestion that SMEs use social media to manage client interactions serves as an example of how SMEs can utilize social media for a variety of operational goals. As an illustration, this might entail enhancing customer connections through cultivating close ties with current and former clients, luring in new clients, and enhancing customer interactions.

Additionally, SMEs utilize social media to advertise their goods and services, raise brand awareness, and increase website traffic (Eggers, 2020). The extensive discourse on leveraging social media to enhance a company's competitive edge stems from both the profound influence of social media on business dynamics and the growing prominence of various social media platforms. According to numerous studies, businesses can increase their success by implementing social media in both internal and external collaboration (Martín-Rojas et al., 2020; Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2018; Olanrewaju et al., 2020). Since social media is regarded as being simple to use and offers simplicity to the direction of those numerous programs, it is accessible to both experienced and inexperienced individuals (Trawnih et al., 2021).

2.3 Empirical Studies on Social Media in SMEs

Amoah and Jibril's (2021) main goal was to evaluate the utilization of social media as a marketing tool for SME development. In order to collect data for the exercise, a total of 800 structured questionnaires were created as part of an intercept and online survey. Research employing PLS-SEM, facilitated by ADANCO software version 2.2.1, indicates that utilizing social media for advertising profoundly influences a company's financial outcomes, business drive, customer perceptions, and growth in market share. This is pivotal in showcasing a positive evolution in their marketing and promotional strategies within the consumer market. This survey reaffirmed the need for businesses to spend money on digital marketing tools and use them wisely if they want to develop and survive in the long run.

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Quaye and Mensah (2018) also looked to determine how SMEs might incorporate particular resources and talents to maintain or enhance their competitive edge. A quantitative survey of 591 manufacturing SMEs in Ghana was conducted using a multi-stage stratified and simple random sample approach. From this sample, the study inferred that innovations in product design and packaging, marketing, retail strategies, and pricing bestow a lasting competitive edge to SMEs in the water, beverage, detergent, and metal fabrication sectors. Additionally, the study found that innovative retailing practices rank second only to novel product designs and packaging in driving a sustained market advantage. The research also posited that integrating marketing proficiency with avant-garde marketing strategies slightly bolsters the competitive edge.

Bocconcelli et al. (2017) also intended to explore the impact of social media adoption in upgrading and innovating selling processes by SMEs facing complex and rapidly changing market scenarios. By aggressively utilizing social media to start and develop a new market, the paper conducted an exploratory case study of Gamma, a mechanical company, in order to accomplish this goal. Utilizing the industrial marketing and purchasing approach, the case study was explored, highlighting the significance of interaction and the interconnectedness of resources. Bocconcelli et al. (2017) discerned that Gamma's harnessing of social media resources facilitated its penetration into new markets, allowing it to withstand and counteract the downturn in its core market. The impact of social media was observed in tandem with other resources, including straightforward, cost-effective machinery, skilled workforce, streamlined production, and logistic capabilities. Social media was also discovered to be a crucial resource for carrying out successful corporate networking efforts.

Qalati et al. (2021) employed the TOE (Technology-Organization-Environment) framework to study the factors influencing the adoption of social media and its impact on SMEs' performance in developing countries. They examined the implications of TOE elements on both the uptake

of social media platforms and the subsequent performance of SMEs in these nations. A closedended questionnaire was utilized in the paper to collect information from 423 randomly chosen respondents who worked for Pakistani SMEs. The results showed a direct, positive correlation between TOE components, social media adoption, and SMEs' performance. The performance of SMEs was observed to be fully influenced by technological factors, while organizational and environmental factors had a partial mediating effect. Moreover, the study also explored the synergistic mediation between these factors.

This study sought to analyze the effects of social media use on SMEs' sales processes. A systematic literature review (SLR) was employed by Wardati and Mahendrawathi (2019) to examine a number of publications that cover the linked research subjects. The findings of this study revealed comparable effects of social media use in SMEs in various nations. The type of industry and social media utilized in accordance with the business goals of SMEs determine how social media is used. The influence that this study produced was nonetheless broad even if it was primarily tied to customers, stakeholders, business partners, and rivals. Therefore, Wardati and Mahendrawathi (2019) suggested conducting additional research to learn more about the motivations behind SMEs' use of social media and how those motivations affect those SMEs' performance.

The study by Effendi et al. (2020) aimed to examine, using the TOE Model, the behavioral intention to use social media in SMEs affected by the COVID-19 issue. The TOE framework served as the theoretical foundation for this investigation. 250 SMEs in Indonesia's Special Region of Yogyakarta participated in the survey as respondents. The COVID-19 crisis impacted SMEs were shown to have a high awareness of social media and a high intention to use it to advertise their products and connect with customers through a structural equation modeling with AMOS. The technological context, organizational context, environmental context, and social media awareness all had a major impact on people's intentions to adopt social media.

The results of this study revealed that the government's assistance would be required during times of crisis brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

McCann and Barlow (2015) delved into the reasons behind SMEs' adoption of social media and the methodologies employed to measure their return on investment (ROI). They curated a literature review to glean insights from the most recent discourses on the utilization and assessment of social media in academic literature as well as in publications with a business orientation. Primary research, conducted in the shape of a survey with SMEs, was initiated to gauge the perceived value of social media and the methodologies SMEs utilize to evaluate its ROI. The findings by McCann and Barlow (2015) underscored that while SMEs had preferences for certain social media platforms over others, a significant 65% of those surveyed did not monitor their ROI. As part of their recommendations, they proposed a comprehensive framework tailored for SMEs, emphasizing the need for a strategic approach to social media use and encouraging SMEs to derive insights from both quantitative and qualitative metrics when assessing ROI.

Finally, Martn-Rojas et al. (2020) aimed to investigate the effects of social media use on the many facets of corporate entrepreneurship. Findings support the usage of social media technologies having an impact on all aspects of corporate entrepreneurship and improving firm performance, based on a sample of 201 technological enterprises. The usage of social media in business is supported empirically in this paper's contribution to the literature. The study's findings also have significant management implications because they outline the steps managers must take to fully profit from social media use and develop their entrepreneurial skills.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

2.4.1 Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) Model

Tornatzky and Fleisher in 1990 introduced the Technology-Organization-and-Environment (TOE) framework, which was later discussed by Rahman and Ratnawati (2021). The TOE framework delineates factors that influence the propensity of a business to adopt technology. TOE asserts that a company's decision to adopt and integrate technological innovations is shaped by three distinct contexts: technological, organizational, and environmental. The "technological context" encompasses both internal and external technologies relevant to the firm. In this regard, 'technology' does not just refer to tangible tools; it also extends to processes and methods that the firm might adopt. The "organizational context," on the other hand, delves into various characteristics and resources inherent to an organization. This includes its size, the degree to which tasks and roles are centralized, the extent of formalization in its processes, its managerial structure, and its human capital. It also considers the amount of slack resources available and the nature of interactions and relationships among its employees. The environmental context, which is not detailed in the provided information, typically refers to the external factors or conditions that might influence the organization's tech adoption, like industry competition, market conditions, or regulatory environments.

The environmental context includes the macroeconomic environment, the firm's rivals, the size and structure of the industry, and the regulatory environment (Chong & Olesen, 2017). These three elements influence how a corporation views the need for, searches out, and employs new technology. They provide opportunities and limitations for technological innovation. Despite being widely employed. The TOE framework has only seen little theoretical advancement since its inception. The TOE framework is "too broad," according to Zhu and Kraemer (2005), and provides a high degree of freedom to vary factors and metrics, therefore there is little need to alter the theory itself. According to Baker (2012), the hypothesis correlates "too well" with

other theories of technology adoption and lacks competing explanations, which is another significant factor. This could possibly be why there is little pressure to change the framework.

2.4.2 Research Gaps

The TOE model was selected for this study since ElHaddadeh (2020) also used it to assess how SMEs adopted the dynamics of innovation in cloud computing by looking at aspects such senior managers' perceptions, IT capabilities, risk perceptions, and adoption barriers. The TOE is utilized as a foundation for assuring the process of innovation confirmation through organizational identification when embracing technical innovation, according to Kim (2015). This makes the framework helpful because, as Awa et al. (2017) point out, it is particularly ideal for examining different contexts of innovation, such as e-commerce, e-business, and entrepreneurial resource planning to gauge the readiness of information technology from SMEs. Then again, the framework is pertinent to this study's objectives because it has also been utilized generally as a theory to evaluate SMEs' adoption of new technologies (eg. Sabi et al., 2018; El-Haddadeh, 2020). The TOE has established itself as the preferred paradigm for comprehending technology adoption (Sugandini et al., 2018:2019), as well as the value creation that comes with new technology (Lin & Chen, 2023).

2.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on providing an in-depth summary of past research on or connected to the subject at hand. In this part, scholarly works, books, and other pertinent materials were examined. By valuing the work of earlier researchers, the chapter helped to establish the study's theoretical framework. The methodological strategy the study plans to use for data collection is described in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In order to achieve the study's goals, this chapter describes the methods the researcher used to discover the answers to the research questions. It describes the research strategy for the study, the population that was intended to be studied, the sample size employed, the data sources and the tools utilized to collect them, the management of the data, as well as the ethical issues.

3.2 Research Design and Methods

Qualitative research, as noted by Hennink et al. (2020), aims to understand the nuanced, holistic, and unique aspects of human experience within the context of those undergoing them. This methodology, as outlined by Silverman and Patterson (2021) involves an interpretive research approach that may incorporate various methods such as case studies, interviews, firsthand experiences, and observations. This approach challenges the foundational tenets of positivism by showing that empirical data not subject to interpretation can indeed be acquired. According to Gill (2020), qualitative research is fundamentally inductive, in contrast to the deductive nature of quantitative research.

In social science fields such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology, qualitative research methodologies permit a comprehensive and in-depth examination of participants, as noted by Byrd (2020). Such depth is particularly valuable when aiming to understand the motives and emotions of subjects, facilitating the drawing of insightful conclusions. Frost (2021) outlines that commonly employed qualitative research methods include in-depth interviews, focus groups, ethnographic studies, content analysis, and case study research.

For the purpose and objectives of this study, particularly to explore the influence of social media on sales promotion in SMEs in Ghana, a qualitative approach was employed, aligning with the perspective of Nassaji (2020) that the research approach should be determined by the study's goals rather than by adherence to a specific paradigm.

3.3 Population Setting and Sample

3.3.1 Setting

The geographical, social, and cultural location where the study is being conducted can be viewed as the research setting (Hancock et al., 2021). In qualitative research, the participants are observed in their natural environments with a primary focus on meaning-making. This means that describing this setting accurately is crucial since the results and their interpretation may depend heavily on it. This study has Accra, the capital of Ghana as the setting for the study.

3.3.2 Population

According to Malhotra et al. (2017), populations are any complete set of entities, such as people, organizations, institutions, or the like, that share some common traits consistent with the goal of the study being conducted and about which researchers hope to draw generalizations. However, the accessible population of this study consists of businesses represented by CEOs, Co-founders, MDs etc of in Accra. For this study, the chosen population is deemed appropriate as they inherently possess comprehensive understanding and strategic insights pertaining to the operational dynamics of their businesses. These individuals, by virtue of their positions, can offer an overarching perspective on the nexus between social media and sales promotion within SMEs. Concentrating on Accra, a predominant commercial epicenter, ensures that the research captures insights from SMEs situated in an environment characterized by urban dynamism and competitive intensity.

3.3.3 Sampling design and Sample size

Choosing a subset of the population to represent the complete population is the process of sampling. Sampling involves choosing a representative subset of the population under investigation in a research endeavour (Schreier, 2018). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), qualitative research aims to understand or interpret phenomena in light of the meanings that individuals assign to various phenomena. Ten (10) participants were chosen as the sample size for this investigation. In line with the qualitative nature of this study, this sample was selected to allow for a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of individual experiences and insights regarding the research topic. This study employed a non-probability sampling technique because, in comparison to probability sampling, it gives researchers more freedom and flexibility in choosing the individual population units (Tongco, 2007). Gill (2020) characterizes non-probability sampling as a technique where sample selection is influenced by the researcher's subjective judgment, rather than by random choice. Purposive sampling in particular was thought suitable for the investigation. Fundamentally, purposive sampling enhances the rigor of the research as well as the reliability of the collected data and findings by aligning the sample more closely with the study's aims and objectives (Creswell & Hirose, 2019). This was therefore necessary since the researcher had to make sure that only study participants who had the necessary expertise and information were included.

3.4 Description of Research Instrument

A structured interviewing guide was the tool utilized in this study to obtain data. Silverman and Patterson (2021) underline that a structured interviewing guide is a pre-established set of questions or prompts that interviewers follow rigorously to ensure uniformity and comparability in data collection across different respondents. The adoption of this instrument was supported on the basis that structured interviews' set format lessens the impact of

contextual factors and other biases. Asking the same questions in the same order to all participants minimizes the risk of introducing bias via the order or nature of questions asked, or via any environmental factors (Kolb, 2008). Additionally, it allowed interviewees to provide additional pertinent information that was missed by the interview guide.

3.4.1 Ethical Considerations

Informed permission, confidentiality, and anonymity were all important ethical considerations in this investigation. Regarding confidentiality, the researcher made sure that the interviewees remained anonymous for the purposes of this study. Together with the manager, the document was completed, submitted, and authorized. Additionally, informed permission was obtained in that the respondents received adequate information about the study's goal and were only permitted to participate in it if they expressed a willingness to do so. The researcher must also weigh important ethical concerns including confidentiality. The respondents received assurances that all of the information they supplied would be used strictly for study.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

A thorough assessment of the literature was conducted before creating the interview guide. The structured interview guide was carefully created to ensure impartiality and consistency on the part of the researcher, as well as a certain degree of standardization of the research process and subjectivity on the part of the participants. During the interviews, every response was audio recorded. The audio recordings of the interviews and the notes gathered were turned into transcripts for data analysis.

3.6 Thematic Analysis

Alhojailan (2012) observes that data analysis is how researchers turn a large amount of data into actionable insights, and there are a variety of data analysis methodologies available based on the type of study. Thematic analysis involves an emergent and interactive process of

interpretation of a set of messages, with some thematic structure as the typical outcome (Neuendorf, 2018). Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis method that involves reading through a data set and identifying patterns in meaning across the data (Clarke and Braun, 2014). To allow for analysis and interpretation, the recorded interviews were transcribed and grouped into topics. The data were thematically categorized in accordance with best practices to reflect the study's goals. Textual presentations of the data gathered for this study included direct quotations when appropriate.

The analysis adopted Braun and Clarke's (2019) framework comprising four main steps: (1) becoming familiar with the data; (2) implementing open coding; (3) organizing the data; and (4) abstraction. Following the initial coding process, axial coding will be employed to establish categories derived from the previously generated codes. Axial coding is a technique in qualitative research aimed at connecting pieces of data to reveal codes, categories, and subcategories that are grounded in the perspectives of the study participants. In essence, axial coding serves as a mechanism for linking data (Jackson et al., 2019). This involves comparing emerging themes across the dataset with the aim of formulating theoretical assertions concerning communicative behaviors.

Gaber (2020) emphasizes that thematic analysis is a technique for systematically identifying, organizing, and offering insights into patterns of meaning (themes) throughout a dataset, with a focus on meaning across the data. Adu (2019) additionally notes that this approach to qualitative data analysis is commonly used on textual datasets, such as interview transcripts. Moreover, thematic analysis is a highly flexible methodology that can be adapted to suit a wide range of research objectives, providing a rich, and detailed account of the data.

3.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the research approach was explained. The chapter's introduction was followed by a discussion of the research methodology. The design of the sampling, the gathering of the data, the presenting of the data, and ethical issues were all covered in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

The study's results are presented in this chapter along with a discussion of them. The study's main goal was to investigate how social media affects SMEs' efforts to promote sales. As a result, the researcher gathered information from marketing/sales specialists or staff members in charge of managing social media for corporate companies in Accra. This is because the sample was thought to be appropriate for addressing the study's goal. The Participants are identified by pseudonyms for the purposes of the analysis because the researcher is very concerned to uphold the Participants' confidentiality. These pseudonyms are; Participant-1 (P1), Participant-2 (P2), Participant-3 (P3), Participant-4 (P4), Participant-5 (P5), Participant6 (P6), Participant-7 (P7), Participant-8 (P8), Participant-9 (P9), and Participant-10 (P10) representing the nine participant who provided data for the study.

4.2 Analysis of Data

The data was then evaluated using the thematic analysis technique, where the researcher read through the transcripts of the in-depth data to find recurring themes, topics, and context trends. Table 1 below shows the themes that developed from this investigation.

Table 1: Interview Themes

THEMES	CODES
1. Usage of Social Media	• Social Media Presence • Platform Choice Rationale • Social Media Strategies Employed
2. Digital Marketing Influence on Sales Promotion	▢ Most-Favored Social Media Marketing Approach ▢ Rationale for Favoring Strategy

| | ☐ Social Media's Influence on Sales |
| | ☐ Social Media and SMES Sales |

Source: Researcher's Field Data 2023

RQ1. What are the principal social media marketing strategies SMEs in Ghana's retail sector uses to promote sales?

4.3 Social Media Usage

4.3.1 Social Media Presence

Various social media platforms dominate the digital landscape. Investigating the organizational presence on these platforms offered insights into modern branding tactics. In analyzing the recent data on organizational presence across various social media platforms, several intriguing patterns emerged. This research sought to understand not merely the numerical distribution but also the underlying strategic choices that these figures might reveal.

P1 elucidated, "*Facebook and Instagram.*" This preference for Facebook and Instagram is echoed by several other participants. Both P5, who communicated, "*TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook,*" and P10, who articulated, "*Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook,*" underscore the central role these platforms play. The recurrent mention of Facebook and Instagram by six out of ten participants suggests their pivotal role in the SMEs' marketing strategy. The allure of these platforms may be grounded in their vast user base and the inherent potential to foster engagement with a wider audience (Hinton and Hjorth, 2019).

TikTok, despite being a relatively recent entrant in the social media domain, has evidently carved a niche for itself. Affirmations from P4, "*Instagram and TikTok,*" coupled with the assertion from P7, "*Instagram, TikTok, and SnapChat,*" shed light on TikTok's burgeoning influence. This traction gained by TikTok among SMEs mirrors a global trend, where the

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platform's inventive content creation tools and its appeal to younger demographics present novel avenues for businesses to amplify their reach (Mehdizadeh, 2020).

Platforms such as Snapchat, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Twitter, while not as recurrently mentioned, hold their distinct significance. P2's specific mention, "*Snap Chat*," and P3's isolated reference to, "*WhatsApp*," are testaments to the bespoke advantages and audience segments these platforms cater to. Each channel possesses distinctive characteristics that can be harnessed by SMEs to cater to specific demographic segments or marketing objectives (Hajli, 2014).

The data indicated a significant preference for Facebook and Instagram, with both platforms securing a presence from three of the organizations surveyed. The dual preference for these platforms could be rooted in their vast user bases, offering organizations a broader reach and engagement potential. Furthermore, both platforms offer robust tools for businesses, from advertising to analytics, potentially influencing their popularity among Participants. Additionally, the convergence of these platforms under one corporate umbrella allows for streamlined marketing efforts, which might appeal to businesses looking to optimize their strategies.

While Snap Chat and WhatsApp each had a singular organization's preference, this does not necessarily translate to lesser effectiveness or appeal. Rather, it indicates a more niche or targeted strategy. For instance, Snap Chat might appeal to organizations looking to reach younger demographics with ephemeral content. WhatsApp, predominantly a messaging platform, might suggest a business model more inclined towards direct communications or a clientele that prefers this medium. TikTok's presence in two organizations offers a glimpse into the platform's rising influence. Given its relatively recent surge in global popularity,

organizations might be leveraging its unique content style and vast user base, especially among younger demographics.

In synthesizing the findings, it is evident that while Facebook and Instagram are undeniably dominant forces for SMEs in Ghana's retail sector, the landscape is neither static nor monolithic. The emergence of platforms like TikTok and the sustained relevance of others such as Snapchat or WhatsApp underscore the dynamic nature of social media. SMEs, to remain competitive and resonant, must exhibit agility and adaptability in navigating this evolving terrain (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019).

4.3.2 Mostly Used Social Media Platform

In assessing the preferences of SMEs in Ghana's retail sector regarding their most employed social platform, distinct patterns emerge that offer insights into the strategic choices these entities make in the realm of digital marketing.

The assertion from P1, "*Facebook,*" mirrors the sentiment of P6, who likewise leaned towards "*Facebook.*" This platform's prominence among these SMEs indicates its influential role. Facebook's versatile tools for business, such as targeted advertisements, sponsored posts, and detailed insights, might be contributing factors to its appeal for these SMEs. Its long-standing establishment and robust user engagement can explain its selection as the prime choice for these businesses, as prior research has highlighted the platform's capabilities in fostering consumer-brand relationships (Bail, 2022).

Instagram's significance is also noteworthy, with P4 specifically stating, "*Instagram,*" a sentiment echoed by P7. P10 provides a unique perspective by declaring a dual preference, "*Instagram and Facebook because I have two businesses.*" This highlights that businesses may employ multiple platforms depending on the distinct needs of their ventures. Instagram, with its visual-centric approach and effective influencer marketing opportunities, has seen an uptick

in businesses leveraging it for brand-building and sales promotion (Chaffey and EllisChadwick, 2019).

TikTok, a newer entrant, has not been left behind in its appeal. P5's exclusive preference for "*TikTok*" underlines the platform's growing clout. With its creative, short-form content and algorithm that prioritizes user engagement, TikTok provides a fresh approach to digital marketing, especially in reaching younger audiences (Mehdizadeh, 2020).

Platforms like Snapchat, WhatsApp, and YouTube, although not as frequently mentioned, signify the bespoke strategies of the SMEs. P2's selection of "*Snap Chat*" and P3's and P9's choice of "*WhatsApp*" underline the niche markets or specific business requirements they cater to. For instance, WhatsApp's business features offer direct and personalized customer engagement, while Snapchat's ephemeral content can be ideal for limited-time promotions (Hajli, 2014). In sum, the divergent choices of social media platforms by the SMEs in Ghana's retail sector underscore the multi-faceted nature of digital marketing. While Facebook and Instagram appear as dominant players, other platforms, each with its unique offerings, ensure that SMEs have a broad spectrum of tools to align with their specific business goals and target demographics.

While the numbers give a sense of distribution, they also underscore the diverse digital landscapes that organizations navigate. No single platform seems to cater to all needs, and the choices made by these organizations appear to reflect a mix of demographic targeting, content strategy alignment, and perhaps even regional preferences. In conclusion, the choices organizations make about their social media presence are not merely about numbers; they reveal deeper insights into business strategies, target audiences, and evolving digital communication norms. In a dynamic digital era, understanding these nuances is crucial for any entity looking to craft a compelling online narrative. This research offers a foundational step in

that direction, paving the way for more detailed investigations into the motivations behind such choices.

4.4 Platform Choice Rationale

The probe aimed to decipher the reasons organizations had a primary preference for specific social media platforms. Through the analysis, the study unveils distinct strategies and motivations, showcasing the evolving and intricate relationship businesses have with the digital realm. From the outset, the variety in social media marketing strategies used by the participants is evident, reflecting the dynamic nature of digital platforms and how businesses uniquely exploit them.

P2 mentioned,

> "*I basically do a lot of promos and giveaways. So, for instance instead of three doughnuts going for GH 100, I would occasionally give it out for GH 80.00. I also do promos on certain festive occasions. On Valentine's Day, I did a pastry basket and added wine and chocolates to it. This is to generate more sales.*"

Here, the strategy of offering discounts, especially on special occasions, is a classic marketing approach that aims to spur sales through perceived value. The coupling of related products, like wine and chocolates with pastries, is an example of bundling to enhance the overall value proposition, which has been observed to increase sales (Shapiro and Varian, 1998). P1 highlighted the role of influencers and bloggers in their strategy:

> "*We use more of influencers who create advertisements for the brand. The influencers are the ones to come up with creative advertisement campaigns that would generate sales. I also sometimes pay bloggers to post my products and services on their page. I choose bloggers who have large following*

because the products would do well on their page. Friends also do share my

pages."

Influencer marketing is rapidly emerging as a dominant strategy, especially in the fashion and beauty sectors (De Veirman, Cauberghe, and Hudders, 2017). Relying on individuals with a significant social media presence to create authentic connections with potential consumers can significantly enhance brand visibility and engagement.

Employing a daily posting routine, P3 revealed,

"*Since I'm not using other social media platforms aside from WhatsApp, I*

have decided to be posting on my status every single day. I also try my best

to add some funny videos or pictures that would draw the mind of my contact

base to the status. It usually works for me."

Consistency in social media postings has been linked to increased engagement (Neher, 2013), and adding humor or entertainment can enhance memorability and shareability.

P5 detailed their TikTok approach:

"*On TikTok, when I go on Live, I get people interacting with me. With my*

large following, I'm able to get a lot of people on my live feed. I therefore use

the advantage of getting followers to sell my products. I usually offer these

customers free delivery on purchase of two or more products. With the

realization that contents that have popular songs featured on goes viral, I

also create contents using the favourite songs people like."

This approach showcases the blend of live interactions, promotional offers, and the power of music to create engaging content—strategies supported by various studies highlighting the efficacy of interactive content on platforms like TikTok (Djafarova and Trofimenko, 2019).

P4 emphasized the importance of feedback:

> *"I run promos online to be able to reach out to a greater audience. I try and figure out what my customers also want in terms of the kind of clothes and design they like. The strategies I often employ is to use my customer's feedback to re-construct new business ideas and change what I have to change about the brand. Customer feedback is something I don't take for granted; it helps me know what I'm doing right or wrong. I improve where I have to and correct what needs to be corrected."*

Leveraging customer feedback as a guiding tool for business decisions is an example of a customer-centric approach. Studies suggest that businesses that are in tune with their customers' preferences and feedback tend to achieve better customer loyalty and satisfaction (Gupta and Zeithaml, 2006). P4's emphasis on utilizing feedback to adapt and evolve their offerings aligns with this perspective.

P6 touched upon frequency and timing of posts:

> *"When we started using Facebook, we devised a strategy to post three times a day. Even on weekends we still posted at odd times on Facebook just to entice customers to purchase from us. Currently, we still post on Facebook is not as frequently as we used to. We now do once a day posting and this is because we do not want to be seen as bothersome. We want to stay relevant yet we want to be more professional about it."*

This illustrates the balance businesses need to strike between staying visible to their audience and not overwhelming them. Research has shown that optimal posting frequency can vary based on the platform and the target audience (Singh et al., 2017). P8 provided insights into content creation:

> *"All that I do is to upload videos on my YouTube and I post the link to the YouTube page on my WhatsApp. I usually post foods for hypertensive and*

diabetic patients. I have also planned to be posting food recipes for weight

loss and weight gain."

Content niching, where businesses focus on creating content for specific audience segments, can help in establishing authority and trust in a given domain. This participant's focus on specific dietary needs may appeal to a niche but engaged audience, underlining the effectiveness of specialized content in digital marketing (Hinton & Hjorth, 2019). P7 discussed visual content and education:

"I advertise using mostly pictures on Instagram. I also educate people on

good skin care routines that one needs to know. I usually devise the strategy

of posting the ingredients I use in my products and what each of them does to

the skin."

Here, the blend of product visualization and education underscores the increasing need for transparency and value-added content in the beauty industry (Labrecque et al., 2013). P9 highlighted trust-building strategies:

"On WhatsApp what I mostly do is to post reviews of customers that have

patronized my products. The more I post reviews of customers being happy

with the products, then it gives the business some sort of leverage."

Authentic customer testimonials can foster trust and enhance the perceived reliability of a business, a strategy particularly pertinent given the proliferation of online scams. Lastly, P10 illuminated the value of relatability and leveraging trends:

"In the beginning of the term or one month into the term, I would just post on

my wall that 'I'm broke and need to pay school fees so people should

patronize me.' I do a lot of trending videos and so I don't always post about

my products but I still get the engagements that I want."

Engaging with current trends and cultural moments can increase reach and engagement, and using personal narratives can make content more relatable and engaging (Berthon et al., 2012). The myriad strategies adopted by these participants reflect both the diversity of social media platforms and the creativity of businesses in leveraging them. From the aforementioned, it is clear that success in social media marketing is a blend of understanding one's audience, staying abreast of platform-specific trends, and maintaining authenticity and trust. In sum, the findings reveal that the choice of platform is not arbitrary. Businesses navigate their digital strategies based on product type, target audience, ease of use, and platform-specific features. The testimonies emphasize that businesses are acutely aware of the unique strengths each platform offers, molding their strategies accordingly.

4.5 Social Media Strategies Employed

The question delved into the specific marketing strategies adopted by organizations on social media platforms, eliciting a variety of unique and tailored approaches. In recent years, social media has emerged as a potent tool for businesses to engage their audience, promote their offerings, and even gather consumer insights. Various strategies have been adopted by businesses, each tailored to their target audience, industry, and objectives. The diverse range of tactics described by the participants in the interviews serves as a testament to the adaptability and multifaceted nature of social media marketing.

P1 articulated a strategic preference for influencer marketing, highlighting,

> *"We use more of influencers who create advertisements for the brand. The influencers are the ones to come up with creative advertisement campaigns that would generate sales."*

They went on to elucidate saying

"I also sometimes pay bloggers to post my products and services on their page. I choose bloggers who have large following because the products would do well on their page. Friends also do share my pages."

In the digital era, influencers often act as modern-day celebrities, with substantial sway over their followers' consumption patterns. Their endorsement can provide a brand with authenticity and reach. Studies have often pointed towards the efficacy of influencer marketing, emphasizing how trusted figures can lend credibility to a brand or product (Freberg et al., 2011). This strategy can particularly resonate with younger audiences, who often perceive influencers as more relatable and trustworthy than traditional celebrities.

On the other hand, P2 brings our attention to the power of seasonal promotions, stating,

"I basically do a lot of promos and giveaways. So, for instance instead of three doughnuts going for GH 100, I would occasionally give it out for GH 80.00. I also do promos on certain festive occasions. On Valentine's Day, I did a pastry basket and added wine and chocolates to it. This is to generate more sales."

Such a strategy leans into the inherent enthusiasm and elevated spending patterns observed during festive seasons. Chen et al. (2009) posited that businesses can leverage the sentimentality associated with festivities, thereby fostering an emotional connection with the consumer. This could amplify the consumer's inclination to indulge, given the positive associations with the festive season. A contrasting approach is offered by P3, who emphasizes consistency in content dissemination, noting, *"I basically post daily on my status. I do that almost every day."* Regular interaction with the audience can arguably foster brand recall and enhance engagement. The continuity might instill a sense of familiarity among the consumers, potentially translating to loyalty. This mirrors the sentiments of Castronovo and Huang (2012),

who highlighted that consistent brand presence can serve as regular touchpoints, enhancing brand recall.

However, P4 adopts a more feedback-centric approach, underscoring, *"We deal in selling products. So, a customer's feedback about certain designs is paramount."* This resonates with the notion that in today's digital age, businesses can no longer afford to be mere broadcasters; they need to be listeners. Encouraging and acting upon customer feedback can enhance product offerings and foster a more collaborative brand-consumer relationship. Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004) substantiated this, suggesting that direct responses to customer feedback could foster trust and improve brand reputation. Moving forward, P5 blends incentivization with marketing, elaborating,

> *"On TikTok, when I go on Live, I get people interacting with me. With my large following, I'm able to get a lot of people on my live feed. I therefore use the advantage of getting followers to sell my products. I usually offer these customers free delivery on purchase of two or more products. With the realization that contents that have popular songs featured on goes viral, I also create contents using the favourite songs people like."*

Here, the value proposition is clear. By offering tangible benefits, the brand not only provides an immediate reason for purchase but also reinforces the notion that it values its customers' loyalty. Similarly, P6 emphasizes the value of direct communication and responsiveness, sharing that,

> *"When we started using Facebook, we devised a strategy to post three times a day. Even on weekends we still posted at odd times on Facebook just to entice customers to purchase from us. Currently, we still post on Facebook is not as frequently as we used to. We now do once a day posting and this is*

because we do not want to be seen as bother. We want to stay relevant yet we

want to be more professional about it."

Such a proactive approach not only streamlines the purchase process but also reassures the consumer of the brand's commitment to customer service.

In the testimonies of P7 and 9, the value of authenticity and tangible proof of product efficacy is highlighted. Both participants focus on showcasing real customer experiences, with P7 stating,

"I advertise using mostly pictures on Instagram. I also educate people on

good skin care routines that one needs to know. I usually devise the strategy

of posting the ingredients I use in my products and what each of them does to

the skin. I also post reviews of clients that have purchased the products and

have positive feedback. I usually tell these clients to add the before and after

pictures so that others see how well my products are."

and P9 adding,

"I also usually ask customers to send pictures where they were wearing my

sandals, suits or bags. The more I post such pictures; it informs others on my

contact list that indeed people are patronizing my brand. It gives my brand

some level of authenticity. I also give room for customers to pay on

instalments and this is because the people on my contact list on WhatsApp

are people I know. On Facebook, the more I posts videos of people rocking

my brand, the more purchases I get. Since I have also linked my Facebook to

my WhatsApp, I ask new customers to save my contact and that is to confirm

my authenticity."

Such strategies employ the psychological principle of social proof. By presenting real-life testimonials, potential consumers can visualize the product's effectiveness, alleviating any purchase hesitations (Cheung et al., 2009). When considering the overarching theme of these strategies, it is evident that each business seeks to foster a unique bond with its audience through tailored content, engagement methods, and value propositions. The interplay of these tactics not only bolsters brand recognition but also cultivates trust, a pivotal factor in today's digital marketing landscape.

P7's strategy of *"posting pictures of clients who have used my products"* and also opting for *"payment on delivery"* suggests an understanding of the contemporary consumer's need for tangibility and reassurance. With the digital space inundated with numerous brands and products, the challenge lies not just in attracting attention but also in offering verifiable proof of product efficacy. By showcasing tangible results and providing flexible payment options, the brand bridges the trust deficit that may exist online, assuaging consumer apprehensions and encouraging purchases. The emphasis on tangible results and flexible payment options is reminiscent of the research by Kim and Peterson (2017), which posited that consumer trust in online platforms is significantly enhanced when businesses provide tangible proofs and ease of transaction.

P8's approach to focusing on specialized recipes, particularly catering to hypertensive and diabetic patients, and planning to provide weight management recipes, highlights a niche marketing strategy. By catering to a specific subset of the population, the brand is not just offering products; it is providing solutions to specific problems. This strategy underscores the brand's depth of knowledge, commitment to customer well-being, and its position as an industry expert. Such an approach can not only attract a dedicated clientele but also foster brand loyalty. The concept aligns with Kotler and Armstrong's (2010) perspective that businesses can

carve out distinct market segments by offering specialized solutions, enhancing their market position and brand loyalty.

Meanwhile, P9's focus on using customer reviews and photographs to build brand authenticity underscores the value of peer endorsement in today's digital landscape. Given the plethora of choices available to the modern consumer, decisions are often influenced by peer reviews and recommendations. P9's strategy taps into this behavioral pattern, using authentic customer experiences as a testament to the brand's quality. Moreover, the strategy of allowing customers to pay in installments showcases an understanding of the consumer's financial dynamics, providing flexibility that can act as a decisive factor for many. The importance of reviews in shaping consumer behavior has been highlighted by Zhu and Zhang (2010), who note that positive peer reviews can significantly influence purchasing decisions in the digital realm.

The responses captured in the interviews underscore the multifarious nature of social media marketing strategies and the need for businesses to adapt based on their industry, audience, and overarching objectives. While influencer endorsements might be apt for fashion or lifestyle brands looking to tap into the influencer's follower base, niche marketing and expert content might be more suited for brands catering to specialized sectors, like health or skincare.

In essence, the digital marketing landscape, as echoed by the participants, is not about a onesize-fits-all approach. It is about understanding the pulse of the audience, recognizing market dynamics, and innovatively combining various tactics to carve a distinct brand identity. Thus, in the realm of digital marketing, businesses need to adopt a dynamic, responsive, and consumer-centric approach, leveraging the vast potential of social media platforms to foster meaningful connections, enhance brand visibility, and drive conversions.

4.6 Dominant Social Media Marketing Approach

The research further sought to ascertain the predominant marketing strategies each organization leaned on within the realm of social media. The impact of social media on sales promotion, as conveyed by the participants, reveals an undeniable intertwining of digital platforms with contemporary commerce. The perspectives captured underscore a landscape in which business dynamics are being reshaped by the vast outreach and interactive capabilities of social media. Their responses revealed a rich tapestry of approaches, tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities offered by their products, target demographics, and platform choices.

P1's statement encapsulates the transformation:

"Social media is now a new norm. As a business entity, if you are interested in social media marketing, then you would be making lots and lots of profits. Way back, people would travel to shops to purchase an item, but now due to social media, one can order goods and it gets delivered right away."

This encapsulation offers a glance into the evolution of consumer behavior over time. The transition from traditional brick-and-mortar shopping experiences to the instantaneous digital era has propelled businesses into reimagining their operational strategies. It is not just about the availability of products but also about the convenience offered to consumers, leading to an enhanced buying experience. Elaborating further on the theme of outreach, P3 observes,

"For those of us corporate women who want to engage in side businesses, social media is the only way to go. You can get a lot of interactions over there. People get to see what you sell and you reach a wider audience."

Such remarks emphasize not only the democratization of the entrepreneurial landscape through social media but also the scalability it offers. In the realm of traditional business, reaching a vast audience necessitated significant financial and logistical investments. However, with

platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, even side businesses can tap into vast demographics, transcending geographical limitations.

Drawing upon this idea of geographical transcendence, P7 states,

> *"Social media is now the new thing. With a physical store, if you are located in greater Accra, you can't sell to someone in Ashanti region but social media allows you to reach people in other regions."*

This observation is particularly significant as it showcases how digital platforms dismantle regional barriers, enabling businesses to cater to diverse consumer bases without the need for physical expansion. However, the significance of social media is not just confined to its expansive reach. P5 mentions,

> *"To be able to achieve a greater impact on sales promotion, one needs to engage more with its target market. Social media gives the business that leverage to interact with customers on their walls and through direct message."*

This personal engagement fosters a sense of community and trust, which is paramount for brand loyalty and repeat business. Yet, it is not merely about direct engagement. P10 touches upon the indirect influence of personal credibility, stating,

> *"I post in almost every page I find myself in and sometimes people buy the products because of you."*

The underlying message here is the convergence of personal and product branding on social media, where consumers might be inclined towards purchases based on the credibility and appeal of the poster. In light of these insights, it is evident that the integration of social media into sales promotion is not just a trend but a requisite for businesses seeking growth and

sustainability in the modern era. The participants' reflections provide a holistic understanding of the multifaceted advantages that these platforms offer, from enhancing reach and engagement to building credibility and brand loyalty. As businesses evolve with the digital age, the strategic incorporation of social media becomes paramount for tapping into contemporary consumer behaviors and preferences.

RQ2. How does social media marketing influence sales promotion of SMEs in Ghana's retail industry

4.7 Rationale for Strategy Choice

The study also investigated the perceived impact of social media marketing on sales promotion, drawing insights from a diverse array of Participants. Their experiences and perspectives offer a compelling narrative on the intertwined relationship between modern digital marketing practices and traditional sales outcomes.

P2 provided a direct testament to the power of social media, revealing,

> *"I don't have a physical shop so all the sales I make is from social media. The more I engage with my followers, the higher the sales I generate."*

The remark underscores the transformative capability of digital platforms in enabling businesses, particularly those without physical storefronts, to generate sales. The emphasis on engagement, *"The more I engage with my followers, the higher the sales I generate,"* further establishes a correlation between online interactions and tangible sales outcomes. P3's perspective aligns with the idea of broadening one's market reach through social media. Stating,

> *"For those of us corporate women who want to engage in side businesses, social media is the only way to go. You can get a lot of interactions over there. People get to see what you sell and you reach a wider audience. When you*

> *are in a localized store, the numbers of people you access are few but with*
>
> *social media, more people could see and patronize."*

…the response portrays the platform's capacity to transcend geographical limitations, making products accessible to a global audience. P1's observation,

> *"As a business entity, if you are interested in social media marketing, then*
>
> *you would be making lots and lots of profits. Way back, people would travel*
>
> *to shops to purchase an item, but now due to social media, one can order*
>
> *goods and it gets delivered right away,"*

…captures the paradigm shift in consumer behavior, driven by the convenience and immediacy that social media commerce provides.

P5 accentuates the pivotal role of customer engagement in achieving impactful sales promotion, asserting that

> *"Social media gives the business that leverage to interact with customers on*
>
> *their walls and through direct message."*

Beyond mere sales, the Participant credits social media with business expansion capabilities, indicating its potential for growth and scalability. P4 champions the ubiquity of social media, deeming it indispensable for business success. The proclamation,

> *"For any business to succeed, it has to be on social media because that's*
>
> *where you get most people,"*

…presents the platform not as a mere choice but as an imperative in today's digital age. What this mean is that, the consensus among Participants is clear: social media marketing exerts a significant influence on sales promotion. From bridging the gap between businesses and global

audiences to redefining traditional norms of commerce, social media emerges as a powerful tool in shaping modern business landscapes.

4.8 Social Media's Influence on Sales

The research explored the understanding how businesses perceive the role of social media in influencing the effectiveness and outcomes of their sales promotions. Across the board, the Participants exhibited a resounding consensus on social media's positive impact.

P1 stated:

> *"It really does. Social media is now a new norm. As a business entity, if you are interested in social media marketing, then you would be making lots and lots of profits. Way back, people would travel to shops to purchase an item, but now due to social media, one can order goods and it gets delivered right away."*

This statement underscores the transformative nature of social media on commerce. The participant points out the fundamental shift in purchasing behaviors, where convenience and immediacy have taken precedence. The move from physically going to a store to online ordering is a direct consequence of the digital age, highlighting the potential for businesses to tap into this change to drive profits.

P3 expressed:

> *"Yes, it does influence sales promotion in a very positive way. For those of us corporate women who want to engage in side businesses, social media is the only way to go. You can get a lot of interactions over there. People get to see what you sell and you reach a wider audience. When you are in a localized store, the numbers of people you access are few but with social media, more people could see and patronize."*

Here, the participant focuses on the accessibility of social media, especially for those juggling multiple responsibilities. Their statement also highlights the democratising effect of social media, allowing even those with limited resources or time to launch and effectively promote their businesses. P2 said:

"It really does. I don't have a physical shop so all the sales I make is from social media. The more I engage with my followers, the higher the sales I generate."

This insight emphasizes the viability of a purely digital business model. Engagement is pinpointed as a critical factor, suggesting that merely having a presence on social media is not enough—it is the quality and frequency of interactions that can drive sales. P5 opined: *"To be able to achieve a greater impact on sales promotion, one needs to engage more with its target market. Social media gives the business that leverage to interact with customers on their walls and through direct message. Social media is now the place to be as a business. It has an influence on sales promotion. It increases sales and helps the business expand."*

Echoing the sentiments of P2, P5 further cements the idea that engagement is integral. Beyond just sales, they highlight the potential for business expansion, suggesting that social media can serve as a springboard for growth. P4 declared:

"For any business to succeed, it has to be on social media because that's where you get most people. Social media has the largest audience and its everything."

This is a bold statement on the indispensability of social media for modern businesses. Their assertion suggests that businesses risk obsolescence if they neglect this vast and dynamic medium. P6 noted:

> *"Social media definitely influences sales promotion because even when you post something on your wall, a friend may see it and also share it on his or her wall or even other platforms. It will therefore increase your sales."*

This response captures the viral potential of social media. One post can be amplified exponentially through shares, reaching audiences that might have been inaccessible through traditional means. P8 detailed:

> *"It influences sales promotion because it gives you a larger audience. I have clients who order large quantities of soup and stews that can last for a month. All this is possible due to social media. I also give free food out to social media influencers who advertise the food for me."*

In addition to recognizing the broad reach of social media, this participant also touches on influencer collaborations, hinting at the various strategies businesses can employ to amplify their reach and sales. P10 commented:

> *"You have to leverage your whole popularity and it depends on who is doing it. I post in almost every page I find myself in and sometimes people buy the products because of you. If you bring out a product or a service and post it on your status or Facebook page, those who will patronize you are those that know you personally. For the first time, they buy the product not knowing whether the product is good or not. Therefore, social media will influence sales promotion based on a variety of reasons."*

The participant's viewpoint accentuates the power of personal brand and trust in influencing sales. The key takeaway here is that on social platforms, trust plays a significant role. People are more likely to purchase from someone they know or have some form of connection with. It also highlights the importance of personal recommendations and the role of individual influence on purchasing decisions. P9 as well shared that:

> *"Social media influences sales promotion greatly because sometimes I posts products that I do not have in stock, so if someone sees the posts and wants one, I just get it for that person. If it is a physical store, you need to get all the products available because the customer would buy what they see. Social media gives you a broader coverage since we are in a global village. I recently wore a batakari and a friend saw it and wanted one. I immediately contacted the person I bought it from and ordered one. I sold it at a price other than its original cost and earned some money on it. All these are possible through social media."*

This is a fascinating take on the flexibility and opportunities afforded by social media. The participant's approach showcases how social media can be used as a testing ground to gauge interest before investing in inventory. They also highlight the benefits of the *'see-now-buynow'* model made possible by social platforms, and how immediate visibility can lead to quick sales. P7 remarked:

> *"Social media is now the new thing. It really influences sales promotion because social media has a wider reach and helps you meet new people daily. What a physical store cannot do, social media does it well. With a physical store, if you are located in greater Accra, you can't sell to someone in*
>
> *Ashanti region but social media allows you to reach people in other regions."* This

reflection underscores the geographical barriers that social media overcomes. Unlike physical stores, which are bound by their location, social media transcends these limitations, enabling businesses to tap into a much wider audience. It is a potent reminder of the unparalleled reach that social media platforms offer. To summarize, the overarching consensus among these participants is that social media plays a pivotal role in modern sales promotion.

Themes of trust, personal branding, flexibility, wide reach, and engagement surface repeatedly, emphasizing the multifaceted benefits social media brings to the table. For businesses looking to stay relevant and competitive in this digital age, the message is clear: neglecting social media might be at their peril.

4.9 Social Media and SMES Sales

Also, because the impact of social media on sales promotions is multifaceted, the probes was to further ascertain whether social media increases, decreases or helps maintain the success of sales promotion. P10 mentioned that,

> *"Social media will increase sales promotion if only you appeal to the needs of the customers. Social media has a bigger coverage so when you bring out products or services that the customers want, your sales will increase."*

This participant brings forward a crucial aspect of marketing: understanding the consumer. While the power of social media is undeniable in terms of its reach, this reach is productive only when it resonates with what consumers desire. It is not just about broadcasting, but about communicating the right message that aligns with the needs and preferences of the potential customers. P10's insight underscores the importance of market research in tandem with social media campaigns to ensure that the product or service offerings strike a chord with the target demographic.

P1 succinctly asserts,

> *"It does increase sales promotion. Social media has changed the face of business in this modern era."*

This perspective embodies the transformative nature of digital platforms in the contemporary business landscape. In just a few words, P1 encapsulates the monumental shift from traditional marketing methods to digital ones, with social media standing at the forefront of this evolution.

The phrase "*changed the face of business*" suggests a deep-seated modification in how businesses operate, interact with customers, and promote their offerings.

Elaborating on the outreach potential of social media, P3 states,

> *"As I earlier stated, you get to reach a wider audience. Since you are getting in touch with lots of people, sales definitely will increase. Sales promotion definitely will be on the increase if your social media engagements are often."*

The participant emphasizes not just the breadth but the depth of engagement. It is not just about having a large audience, but about how one interacts with that audience. The repetitive mention of *'engagement'* implies the importance of an ongoing conversation with the audience rather than sporadic interactions. This consistent engagement creates a rapport and trust between the brand and its potential consumers, thereby facilitating sales. P4 presents a perspective that amalgamates the advantages of extended outreach and cost-efficiency. They note, *"It increases. I meet a larger audience. I work from home and I don't have to spend money renting a store. I just sit in my comfort zone and yet I'm able to access a wide variety of clientele."*

In this narrative, the participant not only alludes to the unparalleled outreach potential of social media but also underscores how it paves the way for a more streamlined and cost-effective business model. The ability to engage with a diverse clientele without the overheads of a physical store points to the democratization of business operations, where even small-scale ventures can have a substantial footprint. P7 delves into the mechanics of social media promotion, highlighting the significance of targeted paid advertisements. They state, *"It increases sales promotion because you can get people patronizing the products. Instagram, per se, has a wider reach and since I do paid advertisements, I get a lot of people reaching out to me."*

This insight unveils the layered nature of social media promotions. Beyond organic reach, platforms like Instagram provide mechanisms to amplify visibility and target specific

demographics through paid promotions. Such strategies not only increase visibility but also ensure that the visibility is among the most relevant audience segments, thereby enhancing the probability of conversions. P5 and P2 reiterate the overarching sentiment about the positive influence of social media on sales promotions. Their affirmations emphasize the general consensus about the potency of these digital platforms in augmenting sales.

P6 introduces a nuanced perspective, shedding light on the delicate balance between visibility and genuine engagement. They remark,

> *"This is a tricky one because the more you post about your business, the more people get to know about the business. Frequent posts and shares on social media increase sales promotion, but you can be on social media and even have lots of followers but when you stop being interactive with your customers and followers, sales promotion would definitely decrease."*

This perspective stands as a testament to the complex dynamics of social media marketing. While visibility and frequency are crucial, they must be supplemented with genuine, meaningful interactions. P8 underscores the interplay of external factors and the nuances of timing in social media promotions. They state,

> *"It will increase sales promotion only if you promote your products and put yourself out there. For my business, when there is a program or a festive season is up, the sales go higher. So during that season, if I don't post anything on my social media platform, then I would incur low patronage."*

This insight accentuates the importance of strategic synchronization with external events or seasons. It is not just about regular promotions but aligning those promotions with real-world events or festive seasons, times when consumers are more inclined to make purchases. P8's observation exemplifies the need for businesses to have a keen understanding of their market's seasonal dynamics and be agile in their promotional strategies to leverage these high-potential

periods. P9 provides a compelling juxtaposition between the traditional brick-and-mortar store and the expansive virtual realm of social media. They explain,

> *"It increases sales promotion a lot. In a physical store, those who will see me are those that are around me or live in the same vicinity with me, but with social media, you get patronage from every part of the country and beyond. If you are in a physical store and someone comes for a funeral in your vicinity and comes to your store to buy something but wants another thing, you can direct the person to your social media platform to see other products you have. Through that, you can generate sales from it."*

This reflection vividly captures the limitless boundaries of digital platforms. While a physical store has a finite reach, confined to its immediate surroundings, a digital platform transcends geographical constraints. The anecdote about directing a customer from a physical store to a social media platform is particularly poignant. It signifies the symbiotic relationship that can exist between offline and online realms, where each augments the other's potential. In summary, the diverse viewpoints provided by the participants encapsulate the multidimensional influence of social media on sales promotions. While there is a unanimous agreement about the power and potential of digital platforms in enhancing sales, the intricacies lie in the strategies employed. Whether it is about aligning with customer needs, maintaining genuine engagement, capitalizing on seasonal peaks, or blending the strengths of offline and online worlds, successful sales promotion on social media demands both understanding and adaptability. As businesses navigate the evolving digital landscape, these insights serve as crucial pointers, guiding them to harness the full potential of social media platforms in their promotional endeavors.

4.10 Social Media as a Sales Promotion Tool

The study examined the perspectives of several participants to understand whether they would

encourage SMEs to adopt social media marketing as a primary tool for sales promotion. P1

stated:

> *"Yes, I would. Any business that wants to thrive and make enough sales has to*
>
> *engage in social media marketing. The business has to be creative in posting*
>
> *ads and engaging its followers."*

This participant acknowledges the quintessential role of social media in the modern business

landscape. Their emphasis on creativity underscores a critical facet: that the mere presence on

social media is insufficient. It is the engagement and originality in content that fosters

connection and in turn, potential sales. They seem to advocate for a dynamic and interactive

approach rather than a passive online presence. P3 mentioned:

> *"I would really encourage that. If you really want to reach a larger audience, then in this*
> *globalized world, social media is the best tool for sales promotion."* Here, the participant

elevates the conversation to a global scale, hinting at the expansive reach of social media. Their

use of the term "*globalized world*" touches upon the borderless nature of modern commerce,

signifying that businesses are no longer limited by geographical constraints. P4 voiced:

> *"It is a global world now; it is an information world so anything you want to*
>
> *sell now has to be on social media. In this 21st century, social media marketing*
>
> *has become the backbone of many businesses."*

This response, similar to the third participant, also accentuates the current zeitgeist – a world

driven by information. Their claim about social media being the "*backbone*" of businesses

speaks to its central role, suggesting that companies devoid of a digital presence may miss

substantial opportunities. P5 offered:

"The world has changed and now everything is done online. The working class are now greater and since they are busy, going out to get things that they need is tiring and very stressful. They prefer sitting in the comfort of their homes and getting the products or services they need. Businesses should therefore take advantage of these changing needs and meet the demands of customers. I would therefore advise SME's to employ the use of social media if they want to greatly impact sales promotion."

This participant delves into the socio-cultural shifts that have come about with technological advancements. Their reference to the growing working class and their evolving preferences reflects an acute awareness of market dynamics. This perception is crucial for businesses aiming to pivot their strategies in line with consumer behavior. P9 posited: *"From all that I've said, any business should get involved with social media marketing. In this our modernized era, if you want to increase your sales, then as a business entity you need to get unto a social media platform. It gives you broader coverage and flexibility. You can sit in the comfort of your home and still sell. Also, you need to have goods in stock before you post; you can post old stock and when a customer is interested, you get it for him/her. On social media, friends can do business on your behalf."*

This participant's comprehensive insight touches on the flexibility and efficiency of online platforms, but also drops a hint on inventory management – emphasizing the fluidity that digital marketing provides. Their unique point about friends conducting business suggests that social media doesn't only facilitate business-to-consumer interactions but also peer-to-peer recommendations, acting as a digital word-of-mouth. P6 expressed:

"In our age now social media is now important but don't solely rely on social media but it should be combined with other methods like doing direct marketing

and personal selling. With that I think the business would achieve greater

success in sales promotion."

This participant offers a balanced viewpoint. While acknowledging the significance of social media, they also champion the combination of both online and traditional methods. Such a diversified approach, as they suggest, could lead to more robust sales promotion strategies. P2 remarked:

"Yes, I would. Social media has wider coverage and as such a business can meet

a wide variety of customers online."

This comment, while concise, reiterates a common theme: the unparalleled reach of social media. P2 emphasizes the capacity for businesses to engage with a diverse customer base on these platforms, hinting at the potential for market expansion and the tapping of previously inaccessible segments. P8 advised:

"I would actively advise more of Facebook and Instagram and then you can add

YouTube. Once you promote the page, it actually puts you out there. On social

media, your location is also put out there so people living around you can easily

patronize you since the delivery fee will be lower."

This perspective brings specificity to the table, highlighting certain platforms over others, which could be an indication of their experiences or the nature of their business. Their mention of location hints at another advantage of digital advertising: geo-targeting. This allows businesses to run localized campaigns, which can be more effective and cost-efficient, especially for SMEs. P7 shared:

"Yes, I would encourage other SMEs to use social media because I have a

physical store and the patronage, I get from the store is lesser than what I get

on social media. But I would also advise that since there are scammers on the

app, if you have a physical store it allows customers trust you."

This response underscores the complementary nature of brick-and-mortar stores and digital platforms. While they've experienced greater patronage online, they also highlight an essential trust element that physical stores bring. This dual presence can act as a validation point for wary consumers and can be a crucial strategy for SMEs aiming to build credibility. P10 elucidated:

"You need to know that it is expensive using social media if only you want to get the coverage you are seeking for. If you want more followers, you need to pay so that your page would be promoted. The more it is promoted, the more people get to know about your business. With that, you can get the sales you want. Social media has helped a lot of businesses. Even businesses that were once not making sales, because of social media, they can now market their business and get people patronizing."

This participant introduces a more nuanced perspective, touching on the investment aspect. While social media platforms offer vast potential, maximizing this potential often requires financial input, especially in saturated markets. Their insight highlights the return on investment that businesses can achieve, but it also acts as a cautionary note for SMEs to be strategic in their spending, ensuring that their investment translates to tangible returns.

In sum, the participants echo the instrumental role of social media in modern sales promotion. Their experiences and insights range from advocating for a robust online presence to blending traditional and digital strategies, indicating the multifaceted nature of business operations in the current era. The overarching sentiment seems to champion adaptability and responsiveness to the ever-evolving consumer landscape.

4.11 Discussion of Findings

4.11.1 Usage of Social Media

Social media's ascent in the modern era as a potent platform for businesses to engage with customers, market their products, and increase brand visibility is undeniably evident. The

findings from this study present a rich tapestry of how various Participants perceive and employ social media in the context of their organizations.

From the data, it is apparent that multiple social media platforms hold importance for different organizations. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snap Chat, WhatsApp, and TikTok emerged as primary channels where organizations have a presence. Interestingly, while Facebook and Instagram were preferred by several Participants, platforms like Snap Chat and WhatsApp also found unique niches. Notably, the preference for a platform was not just about its popularity but how it catered to an organization's unique needs and target audience. Kaplan and Mazurek (2018) highlight that the choice of a platform should be guided by its specific audience and functionality. For instance, the preference for Facebook, as noted by P1, was rooted in its ease of access and the presence of friends who would share and promote products, echoing the findings of Evan et al. (2021) on the effectiveness of word-of-mouth in online environments.

The reasons behind the choice of specific platforms highlighted the individualized strategies and goals of organizations. P2's inclination towards Snap Chat was driven by its feasibility for posting product videos, while P3's preference for WhatsApp was a reflection of its utility in reaching a target customer base. This variance aligns with the research of Chaffey and Smith (2022), who note that businesses should prioritize platforms that align with their customer demographics, product type, and organizational goals.

In terms of marketing strategies employed, the findings indicated a broad spectrum of approaches. Promotional offers, leveraging influencers, frequent posting, and utilizing customer feedback were some prominent strategies mentioned. These strategies are corroborated by the work of Tuten and Solomon (2017), who state that successful social media

marketing is a blend of promotional content, engagement strategies, and direct interaction with consumers.

The emphasis by P4 on customer feedback as a cornerstone of their marketing strategy reflects the current shift in marketing paradigms. According to Kotler et al. (2021), modern marketing is interactive, with customer feedback playing a crucial role in shaping products, services, and marketing strategies. P5's approach, leveraging live interactions and popular content themes like music, underscores the value of real-time engagement in the digital age, an aspect highlighted by Prensky (2010) as crucial for capturing and retaining digital-native consumers.

When it came to the most frequently employed marketing strategy, Participants gravitated towards tactics that provided them with the maximum outreach and engagement. From leveraging the vast follower base of influencers to offering promotional discounts, the strategies highlighted reflect a deep understanding of consumer behavior and the nuances of online marketing. The findings are reminiscent of the work of Deighton and Kornfeld (2009), who argue that digital marketing success hinges on understanding and harnessing online consumer behavior patterns.

Ultimately, the findings of this study underscore the diversity and depth of social media usage and strategies among modern businesses. Organizations are not just present online; they're dynamically engaging, adapting, and evolving in line with consumer behavior and platform functionalities. As the digital landscape continues to change, so too will the strategies and platforms that organizations employ.

4.11.2 Digital Marketing Influence on Sales Promotion

The utilization of social media as an essential tool for marketing and promotion is well documented in academic research. The data gathered from Participants further solidifies this claim and offers nuanced insights into how different entities leverage these platforms.

Participants indicated a range of reasons for employing specific social media marketing strategies. The strategies were largely informed by a combination of their unique business needs and understanding of the digital consumer behavior. For instance, the emphasis on customer feedback by P4 suggests a firm belief in co-creation and value generation through customer insights, a sentiment echoed by Payne et al. (2009), who argue that businesses benefit greatly from integrating customer insights into their business models.

There was a unanimous consensus among Participants that social media marketing has a significant influence on sales promotion. Participants highlighted the increased accessibility and reach afforded by these platforms. As P2 pointed out, without a physical shop, their entire sales model hinges on their social media presence. This mirrors the findings of Michaelidou et al. (2011), who stress the importance of social media for businesses, particularly in sectors without a traditional brick-and-mortar presence.

When questioned about the efficacy of social media in bolstering sales promotion, the majority of Participants believe that it increases sales promotion success. They underscored the global reach and the ability to connect with diverse audiences as pivotal in amplifying sales. P3 particularly emphasized the vast reach social media affords, aligning with the ideas of Kietzmann et al. (2011) who highlight the extensive networking capabilities of social platforms.

The Participants were overwhelmingly in favor of other Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) adopting social media marketing for sales promotion. P5 encapsulated the prevailing sentiment by stressing the change in consumer behavior and the growing inclination towards online purchases. This endorsement finds backing in the research of Kaplan and Mazurek (2018) who recommend that SMEs, given their resource constraints, can gain disproportionately from leveraging cost-effective platforms like social media for outreach and engagement.

To conclude, the insights derived from the Participants affirm the established understanding of the crucial role social media plays in modern business strategies. It is clear that in the evolving digital landscape, businesses, big or small, stand to gain immensely from an astute and responsive social media strategy.

4.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents the findings of the study with an accompanying discussion. The primary purpose of the study was to explore the influence of social media on sales promotion in SMEs. In light of this, the researcher collected data from marketing/sales professionals or personnel in charge of social media management of corporate organizations in Accra.
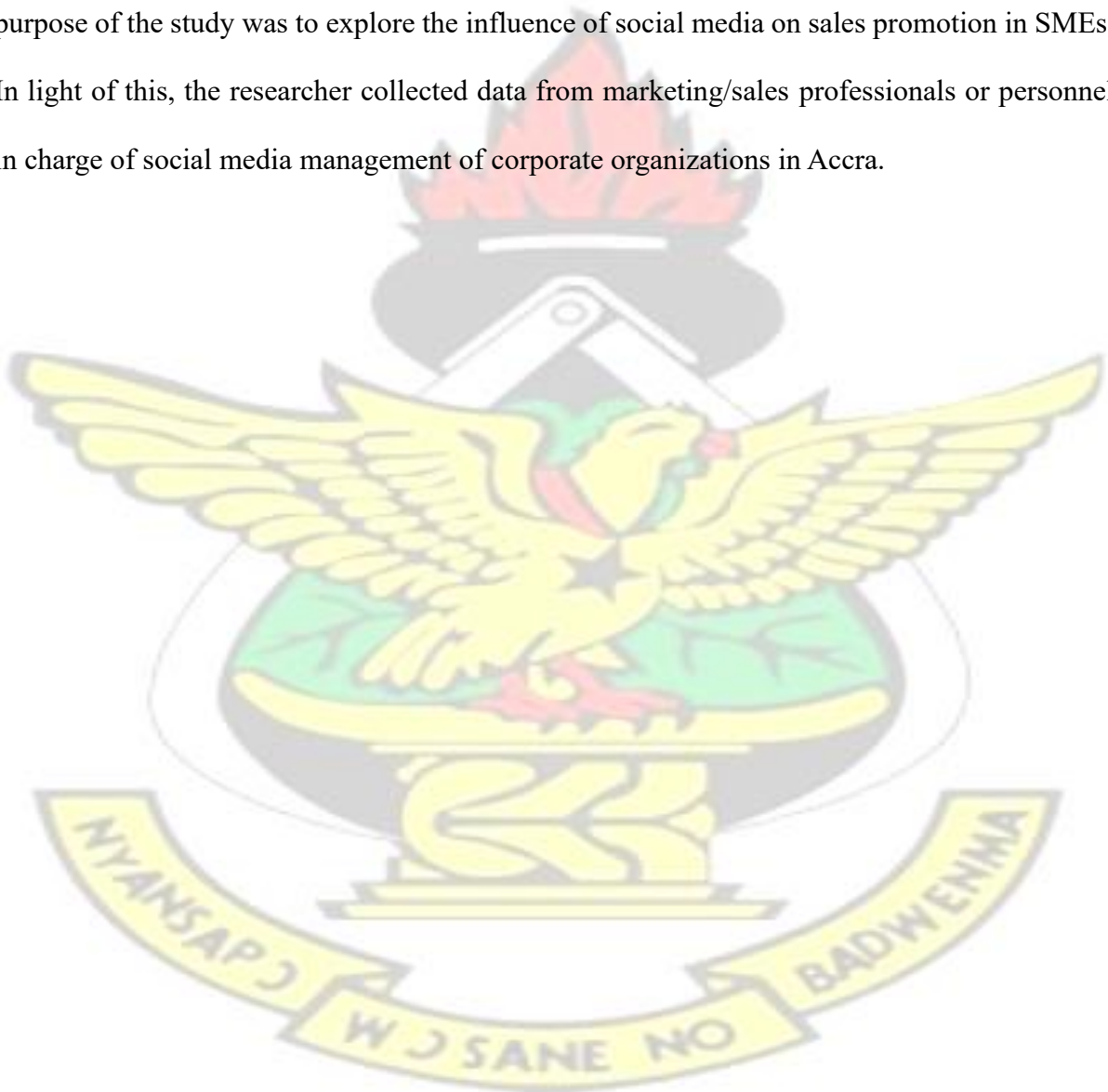
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes some of the study's significant findings and draws conclusions based on the study's various objectives. It includes some helpful recommendations that can assist organizations as well as corporate leadership improve on their digital media management efforts.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The aim of the study was to explore the influence of social media on sales promotion in SMEs. In doing so, the objectives set included identifying the principal social media marketing strategies Ghana's retail sector uses to promote the products of SMEs, and assessing the influence social media marketing has on the sales promotion of SMEs in Ghana's retail industry. Through a qualitative research approach, the study collect data from ten (10) marketing/sales professionals or personnel in charge of social media management of corporate organizations in Accra through in-depth interviews. It was found that all businesses use social media. In terms of how they employ them in their daily activities actually depended on the scope of the organizational objectives and industry as well. In relation to the influence of social media on sales, it was found that the study affirms the established understanding of the crucial role social media plays in modern business strategies. It is therefore clear that in the evolving digital landscape, businesses, big or small, stand to gain immensely from an astute and responsive social media strategy.

5.3 Conclusion

This study has underscored the pivotal role of social media in the contemporary business landscape, with a particular emphasis on its relevance to businesses operating in Ghana. From

the data collated from various Participants, there's an unmistakable consensus: social media has revolutionized the way businesses engage with their target audiences, offering unparalleled reach and engagement that traditional mediums simply cannot match.

In Ghana, where rapid technological advancements and increased internet penetration rates have led to an upsurge in digital consumption behaviors, the utility of social media platforms becomes even more pronounced. Participants, many of whom are key stakeholders in SMEs, highlighted how platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and WhatsApp not only offer cost-effective marketing solutions but also present opportunities to engage directly with a global audience right from the comforts of their homes.

Importantly, the study revealed that the success of many businesses in Ghana hinges directly on their social media strategy. Whether it is leveraging customer feedback to refine products, employing influencers for wider reach, or utilizing the inherent interactive features of platforms to drive sales, the dynamism and flexibility offered by social media are unparalleled.

Furthermore, the shift in consumer behavior was evident. Today's Ghanaian consumer is digitally savvy, prefers the convenience of online shopping, and engages more with brands that maintain an active and responsive online presence. In essence, the modern Ghanaian business ecosystem thrives on connectivity, engagement, and digital outreach, all facilitated by social media. What this means is that, for businesses, particularly in Ghana, to thrive in this modern era characterized by digital interconnectedness, the integration of social media into their marketing and operational strategies is not just advisable but essential. The landscape has evolved, and businesses must adapt to remain competitive and relevant. Social media, as evidenced by the findings of this study, stands at the forefront of this evolution, promising a future where businesses and consumers are more connected than ever.

5.4 Recommendations of the Study

5.4.1 General (Objectives Based)

- Given the variability in how businesses utilize social media depending on their unique organizational objectives and industry-specific needs, it is imperative for SMEs to create customized social media plans. These should align closely with their specific goals and the peculiarities of their sector.

- Also, as the study affirms the pivotal role of social media in modern business strategies, it becomes crucial for organizations to ensure that their marketing and sales professionals are adept in social media management. This skill set can be developed and updated through periodic training programs.

- Further, the qualitative nature of this research emphasizes the importance of data in understanding the dynamics of social media's impact on sales. Therefore, SMEs should invest in advanced analytics tools to measure the efficacy of their social media efforts. This will enable more informed decision-making and strategy optimization.

5.4.2 Recommendations for Academia

- Tertiary institutions in Ghana should incorporate comprehensive courses on digital marketing, especially social media marketing, into their curriculum. By understanding the importance of social media in modern commerce, graduates would be better equipped to navigate the evolving business landscape and bring innovative strategies to the companies they join.

5.4.3 Recommendations for Industry

- Businesses, especially SMEs, should invest in regular training for their staff on the latest trends and tools in social media marketing. This would ensure that businesses remain competitive and are able to utilize new features and platforms as they emerge.

- Industries should encourage collaborations or consortiums where businesses can share best practices, resources, and insights on social media strategies. Such collaborations can facilitate learning, especially for start-ups and smaller entities that might not have extensive resources.

5.4.4 Recommendations for Policy(makers)

- The Ghanaian government should consider introducing guidelines and standards for social media marketing to ensure ethical and transparent practices. This would not only protect consumers but also ensure that businesses maintain a level playing field.

- Policymakers should prioritize the enhancement of digital infrastructure in both urban and rural areas. Reliable and high-speed internet is a fundamental necessity for effective social media engagement. By improving accessibility, the government can ensure that businesses across Ghana, irrespective of their location, can benefit from the myriad opportunities that social media marketing offers.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear Participant,

This is a data collection instrument to help achieve the objective of this study titled "Exploring the Influence of Social Media on Sales promotion in SMEs". Please answer honestly and note that this exercise is for a purely academic purpose.

SECTION A: RQ1. What are the principal social media marketing strategies SMEs in Ghana's retail sector uses to promote sales?

1. a. Which social media platforms does your organization have presence on?

    b. Which social media platform does your organization employ the most?

2. Why does your organization employ the social media platform stated?

3. What are some of the social media marketing strategies you employ?

4. Which social media marketing strategy does your organization employ the most?

SECTION B: RQ2. How does social media marketing influence sales promotion of SMEs in Ghana's retail industry

5. Why does your organization employ the social media marketing strategy stated?

6. a. In your view, would you say social media marketing has any influence on the sales promotion?

    b. What is your reason for the answer above?

7. Would you say social media increases, decreases or helps maintain the success of sales promotion?

8. Would you encourage other SMEs to employ social media marketing as a tool for sales promotion (and why)?

APPENDIX B

LIST OF SMES USED FOR THE STUDY

1. NEW LOOK OPTICALS

2. NANNIES PASTRIES

3. B-HEALTHY FOODS

4. GHAVINNI CLOTHING

5. ALL THINGS ABROKYIRE

6. BEL COSMETICS

7. KEK'S GLOW

8. WAAKYE BOSS

9. THE ONE SUIT AND CLOTHING

10. VIVA YOGO AND PERNEBGH